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510 Butler Avenue
Martinsburg, WV 25405
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NEWS RELEASE

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Contact:
Monique Richards
304-263-0811 ext.2037
Cell: 304-433-6407
monique.richards@va.gov

Local Veterans return home with Distinctions and Awards

MARTINSBURG, W.Va. – Nine Veteran patients returned to Martinsburg VA Medical Center (VAMC) with seven Gold Medals, four Silver Medals and three Bronze Medals during the 2014 National Veterans Golden Age Games (NVGAG) held in Fayetteville, Arkansas.

The following Veterans won medals in their division in the following categories:

Celestine Nelson	Gold Medals in shot put, quarter-mile cycling, and half-mile cycling
Fred Wisner	Gold Medal in half-mile power walk, Silver Medal mile power walk and Bronze Medal in quarter-mile cycling
James Eells	Gold Medal in swimming freestyle 50 yard and Silver Medal in swimming freestyle 25 yard
Sandra Carroll	Gold Medal in swimming freestyle 50 yard and Silver Medal in swimming freestyle 25 yard
Pierce Smith	Gold Medal in mile power walk and Silver Medal in half-mile power walk
Sylvester Smith	Bronze Medal in shot put
Zachary Johnson	Bronze Medal in shot put

Celestine “LaRue” Nelson, set the female shot put record by over seven meters in her division and Pierce Smith set a new time record in the mile power walk in his division.

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“This year’s team surpassed last year’s medal total, with three less members on the team,” said Darren “Chewie” Yowell, medical center recreation therapy assistant and Golden Age Games coach. “It is very positive to see their year round training and wellness program pay off.”

Competing in his second year of the NVGAG, Zachary Johnson was a first-time victor in the shot put and Fred Wisner received his first Gold Medal in the half-mile power walk while exceeding his personal best in the event. Robert “Sparky” Sparkes, last year’s George Gangi Inspiration Award recipient, was the oldest participant at the NVGAG at the seasoned age of 96.

“They truly do inspire their fellow Veterans,” said Yowell. “We will be inviting new members and begin training in September for next year’s games in Omaha, Nebraska.”

Veterans from the Martinsburg VAMC have participated in the Games for more than 11 years. During last year’s Games, Veteran patients from Martinsburg VAMC took home 12 medals. Additionally, The Coach of the Year Award was awarded Yowell.

Participants have to be 55 years of age and older in order for them to compete against other participants in various high-and low-impact sports events. This year’s group of Veteran patients, age range was 58 to 96 years old.

Sponsored by the Department of Veterans Affairs, the National Veterans Golden Age Games is the only national multi-event sports and recreational seniors’ competition program designed to improve the quality of life for senior Veterans, including those with a disability. The National Golden Ages began in 1985 in Albany, Georgia.

To view photos of the local Veterans at this year’s National Golden Age Games, visit <https://www.facebook.com/MartinsburgVAMC>.

The Martinsburg VA Medical Center mission is to honor America’s Veterans by providing exceptional health care that improves their health and well-being. Located in West Virginia, the medical center offers a comprehensive range of services, including internal medicine, ambulatory surgery, audiology and speech pathology, dental, nursing home, nutrition, podiatry, prosthetics, women’s health, mental health, and rehabilitation medicine. With a service area of nearly 125,000 Veterans in 22 counties in Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia, the medical center operates five VA-staffed Outpatient Clinics in Cumberland, Hagerstown and Fort Detrick, Maryland and Stephens City, Virginia and Petersburg, West Virginia and two contract clinics in Harrisonburg, Virginia and Franklin, West Virginia.

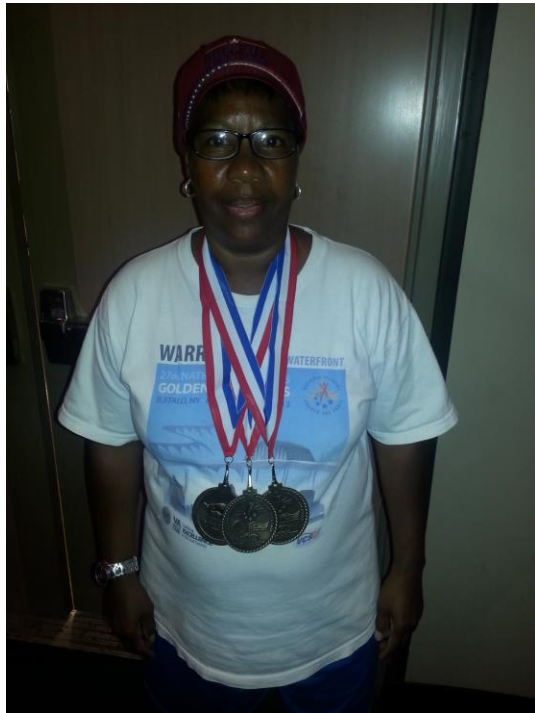


Photo 1 caption: The “Golden Girl”, Celestine “LaRue” Nelson took home three Gold Medals during the 2014 National Golden Age Games that was held in Fayetteville, Arkansas, June 28 to July 2. The retired U.S. Army Veteran won Gold Medals in shot put, quarter-mile cycling, and half-mile cycling.



Photo 2 caption: The Martinsburg VAMC 2014 National Golden Age Games Participates. Front Row: Fred Wisner, Robert “Sparky” Sparkes, Celestine “LaRue”

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Nelson and Sylvester Smith. Back Row: James Eells, Walter Mason, Pierce Smith and Zachary Johnson